



BILL RICHARDSON
GOVERNOR

State of New Mexico
ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT
Office of the Secretary
Harold Runnels Building
1190 St. Francis Drive, P.O. Box 26110
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87502-6110
Telephone (505) 827-2855
Fax (505) 827-2836



RON CURRY
SECRETARY

DERRITH WATCHMAN-MOORE
DEPUTY SECRETARY

March 1, 2004
Immediate Release

Contact: Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Dir.
Phone: (505) 827-0314

Convenience Store Safety Hearing Tomorrow in Santa Fe; Victims of Store Violence, State Regulators Available for Interview at 9 am

(Santa Fe, NM) — The New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board (EIB) will hold a public hearing on Tuesday March 2 at 9:30 am to consider new regulations to better protect clerks and customers of the state's convenience stores. The hearing will be held in the Marion Hall Building's Second Floor Hearing Room, 224 East Palace in Santa Fe.

Prior to the hearing, NMED will hold a media availability at the Marion Hall Building beginning at 9 am. Victims of store violence, Environment Secretary Ron Curry, Senator Richard Martinez and state OHSA regulators will be available at this time for interview.

In recent years, a series of high profile convenience store acts of violence, including the well-publicized murders of clerks in Tucumcari and Hobbs, have highlighted the need for better regulatory protection of late night retail employees. Recognizing this need, Senator Richard Martinez sponsored and the Legislature passed Senate Joint Memorial 4 in the 2003 session. It directed the New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Occupational Health and Safety Bureau (OHSB) to investigate the problem and suggest solutions. The regulations to be considered are the result of that study.

If enacted, requirements in these regulations will include:

- Increased lighting in parking and store areas
- Windows clear of signage
- Video surveillance cameras
- Silent alarm linked to police station
- Time lock safes
- Employee training on safety and security issues
- An additional person on duty at night or limiting access to employees

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These recommendations are part of the bureau's recently completed study of violent or potentially violent acts against convenience store employees between the hours of 11 pm and 5 am. To compile data on violent acts, OHSB contacted police departments in Albuquerque/Bernalillo County, Farmington, Hobbs, Las Cruces, Santa Fe and Taos as well as the State Police and the New Mexico Department of Labor. The study focused on the period of January 1998 through April 2003.

Examining data for both clerks inside stores as well as acts perpetrated against anyone else on the property, the OHSB study found 16 reported homicides, 24 rapes, 37 kidnappings, 392 batteries, 1,451 assaults, 467 aggravated assaults, 7 drive-by shootings, 2,633 robberies, 70 suicides and 23,432 reports of theft, among thousands of other reports.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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